

Psychology of supermarkets

From a consumers point of view, a supermarket is quite simple; Put what you want into your trolley and go through the check-out. Behind the scenes though, psychology is used a lot to define what products and brands you buy in supermarkets. Stands are designed to catch your eye and the store layout is structured to maximize profit.

Through my investigations, I have found the following tactics can be used supermarkets and similar stores.

Eye level marketing

Generally speaking, the most expensive items with high profit margins are placed on shelves that are at shoppers' eye level. This is because you are more likely to see them than the less profitable brands at the very top or near your feet..

Aisle order

Some customers, particularly men, tend to simply shop for what they want, walking down an aisle grabbing what they want, turning back and walking the way they came, this is called the 'Boomerang Effect'. In order to maximize shopper and produce contact time, shops therefore place major items and brands in the middle of aisles ensuring that from any direction the customer has to walk the furthest to reach them.

Product grouping

Items that complement each other are often found close together to entice you to buy more. You'll often find pasta sauces on the same display as a featured brand of pasta.

Food smells make you feel hungry

Another tactic supermarkets use is the smell of freshly baked bread coming from the in-store bakery during the after-work rush. The smell of warm bread makes people feel hungry. When you feel hungry while shopping you are more likely to buy additional items.

Canned smells

Most Supermarkets bake their bread early in the morning, however to entice more custom some have resorted to pumping out the smell of fresh baking bread to add to the illusion that it is constantly baked through the day.

Essentials at the back

Supermarkets hit upon the idea of placing the essentials, such as bread and milk, at the back of the shop. This is in order to make people have to walk past the rest of the produce, and heighten the possibility of impulse buys, in order to get their necessities. Changing rooms in clothes shops are almost always situated at the rear of the shop.

Attracting children

One American supermarket chain hit upon the idea of drawing a hopscotch in the aisle next to the children's cereal in order to make the children play and thus pin Mom & Dad to a point where the children could hassle them for treats.

Irrational Pricing

Irrational pricing is putting the price of items at say 4.99 instead of 5. The reason offered for not instead rounding \$4.99 to \$5.00 is based on memory processing time. Rounding upward involves an additional decision compared with storing the first digits. Furthermore, due to the vast quantity of information available for

consumers to process, the information on price must be stored in a very short interval. The cheapest way to do so, in memory and attention terms, is by storing the first digits. Therefore customers perceive to be getting a better deal than they in fact are.

Order Of Price

Shops will often be laid out in order of price with the most expensive items being encountered at the beginning of your visit and the cheapest at the end. This is done to play on our sense of comparison, we are much more likely to spend money on accessories etc if we have just agreed to buy an expensive item, as in comparison they will seem cheaper than had we encountered them first.

Point Of Sale

Whilst you are waiting to pay retailers often install Point Of Sale displays, this is especially prevalent in Supermarkets who install racks of chocolate to tempt bored children waiting with their parents.

Shuffle

Many shops have a policy of regularly rotating the stock, this happens especially in supermarkets where people regularly shop for the same items. The idea obviously is to confront customers with a variety of items aside from their regulars and encourage them to explore areas of the shop they may not usually visit.

Time

The longer customers spend in a shop the more they are likely to spend. Therefore shops work to make sure customers have to spend the maximum amount of time in their stores, placing obstacles constantly in the way of efficient shopping.

Source: <http://www.syncrat.com/articles/psychology-of-supermarkets>